



LUKE CAGE



MARVEL

005
WALKER
BLAKE
MENYZ

While imprisoned for a crime he did not commit, **Luke Cage** was subjected to medical experiments that gave him superhuman strength and bulletproof skin. Once free, he used his abilities to become a Hero for Hire, protecting people who had nowhere else to turn. His mission has taken him to Wakanda, the Savage Land, even Avengers Mansion, but Luke has never forgotten where he came from.

Luke Cage came to New Orleans for the funeral of Noah Burstein, the man who gave Luke his unbreakable skin. However, Burstein's death was faked and he was being held captive by Cyril Morgan, who was looking to profit off the dangerous experiments Burstein was conducting that saved the life of his son, Caleb, but gave him violent outbursts only held at bay through regular medication.

Overcome with guilt, Caleb freed Burstein, who escaped to one of his old labs, where Luke, Burstein's assistant Dr. Mornay, and an injured Mitchel Tanner (A.K.A. Warhawk), one of his original test subjects, were shocked to see him alive. Before the shock could wear off, the Ninth Ward Mafia (a gang led by KevLar that was also experimented on by Dr. Burstein and hired by Cyril Morgan to kill Cage and Warhawk) and a group of mercenaries hired by Morgan's shady business associates both descended on the lab. Burstein, Mornay, and Warhawk escaped, leaving Luke to face the deadly and increasingly unhinged KevLar.

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MORGAN RESIDENCE.
LESS THAN A MONTH AGO.

HOW *DARE* YOU TALK TO MY HUSBAND THIS WAY? AFTER ALL HE'S DONE FOR YOU--FOR YOUR *SON*--YOU HAVE THE AUDACITY TO *THREATEN* HIM? TO *THREATEN US*?

EMMA, SWEETHEART... IT'S OKAY.

IT IS *NOT* OKAY, NOAH. THIS MAN IS THREATENING TO EXPOSE *YOU* FOR *HIS* CRIMES.

DON'T TALK TO ME ABOUT CRIMES WHEN IT'S *NOAH* WHO'S BEEN CONDUCTING SECRET EXPERIMENTS--USING MY MONEY TO FUND HIS MAD SCIENTIST AMBITION.

BOTH OF YOU--DON'T DO THIS.

NOAH IS SAVING LIVES-- MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE. YOU'RE THE ONE TRYING TO MAKE A PROFIT FROM ALL OF HIS RESEARCH.

WHAT WOULD THE *AUTHORITIES* SAY ABOUT YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN ALL THIS? ABOUT YOUR CONNECTION WITH THAT MOBSTER, CORELLO?

STOP RIGHT THERE...

...BEFORE YOU SAY ONE THING TOO MANY.

DAD... MRS. BURSTEIN... BOTH OF YOU...

...PLEASE... JUST...
STOP!

now.

KEVIN LARSEN--KNOWN ON THE STREETS AS KEVLAR. HE'S ONE OF WHO-KNOWS-HOW-MANY PEOPLE BURSTEIN HAS EXPERIMENTED ON.

ONLY HE'S NOT LIKE ALL THE OTHERS.

HE'S STRONGER THAN THEM...

...STRONGER THAN ME. THE EXPERIMENTAL BLADES THAT SLICED ME UP HAVE NO EFFECT ON HIM.

YOU WANNA TEST ME, CAGE?!

I JUST HOPE...WELL...

...I HOPE HE'S NOT AS CRAZY AS ALL THE OTHERS.

FROM WHAT I'VE SEEN, IT DOESN'T LOOK GOOD.

NO, MAN-- NOT LOOKING TO TEST YOU. THAT'S THE LAST THING I WANNA DO.

MAYBE WE JUST...YOU KNOW...COOL OUT A BIT.

BOTH OF US...

...JUST TAKE IT EASY FOR A MINUTE.

TAKE IT EASY?

AIN'T NOTHIN' TO TAKE EASY.



HE'S A KID--NOT EVEN TWENTY.

YOU SEE WHAT I JUST DID?

YOU SEE ALL THESE FOOLS I JUST KILLED?



AND I SEE IT--HIM COMING DOWN OFF THE ADRENALINE RUSH OF BATTLE.

I SAW.



HE'S NOT A CRAZED KILLER.

I...



AT LEAST HE WASN'T.

I AIN'T...



NOW HE IS.

...NEVER KILLED ANYONE BEFORE.



NEVER KILLED ANYONE.



KEVIN... I'MMA CALL YOU KEVIN, COOL?

YOU'RE DEALIN' WITH SOME PROBLEMS RIGHT NOW, BUT I AIN'T ONE OF THEM.



KNOW WHAT I'M SAYIN'?

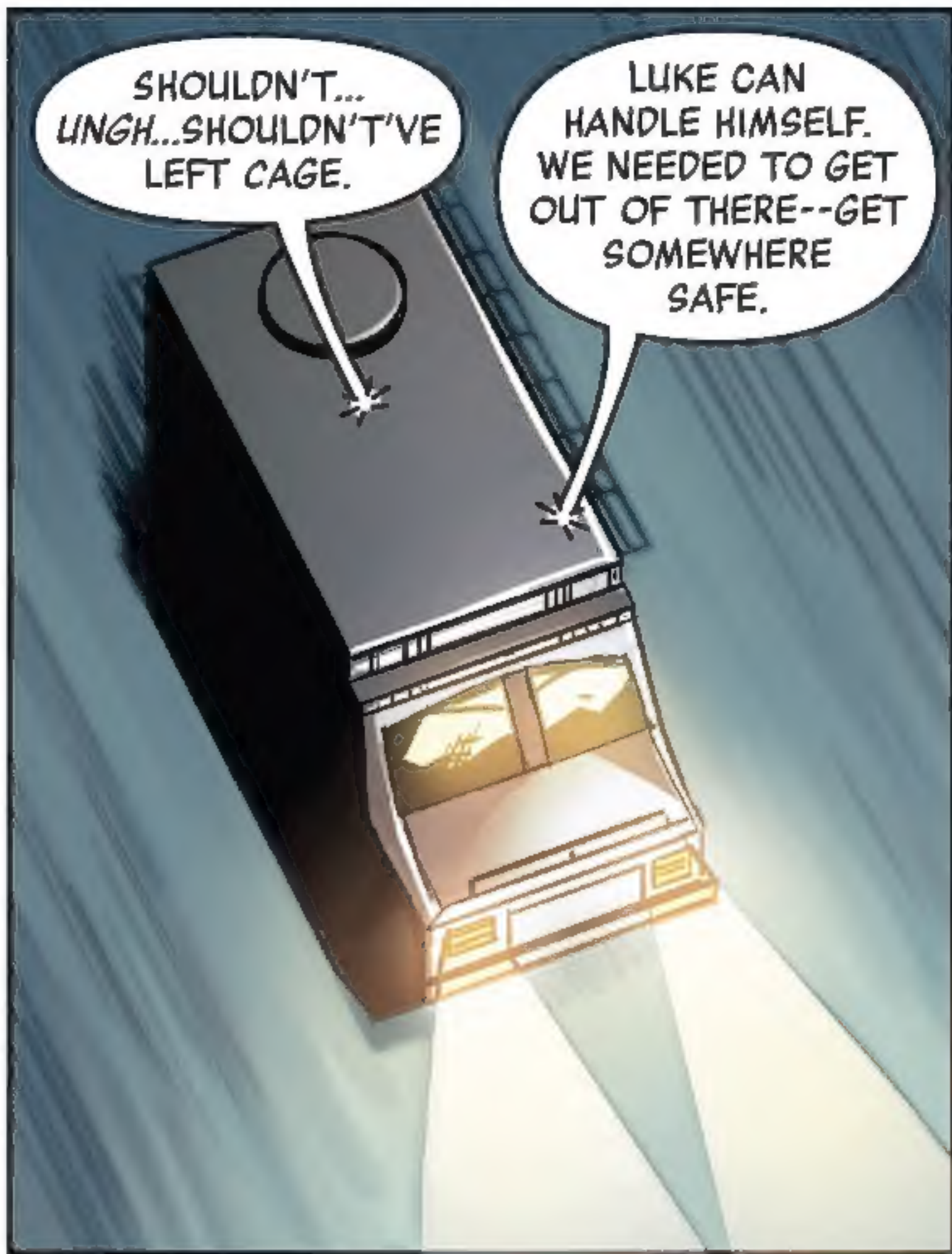
DIDN'T COME HERE TO KILL NOBODY. HE WANTED US TO KILL YOU, BUT WE WASN'T GONNA DO IT.



WHO WANTED YOU TO KILL ME?

MR. FILTHY-RICH-MONEYBAGS--CYRIL MORGAN.







THIS IS "FOR THE BEST"? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

I DON'T THINK YOU UNDERSTAND THIS PLACE...



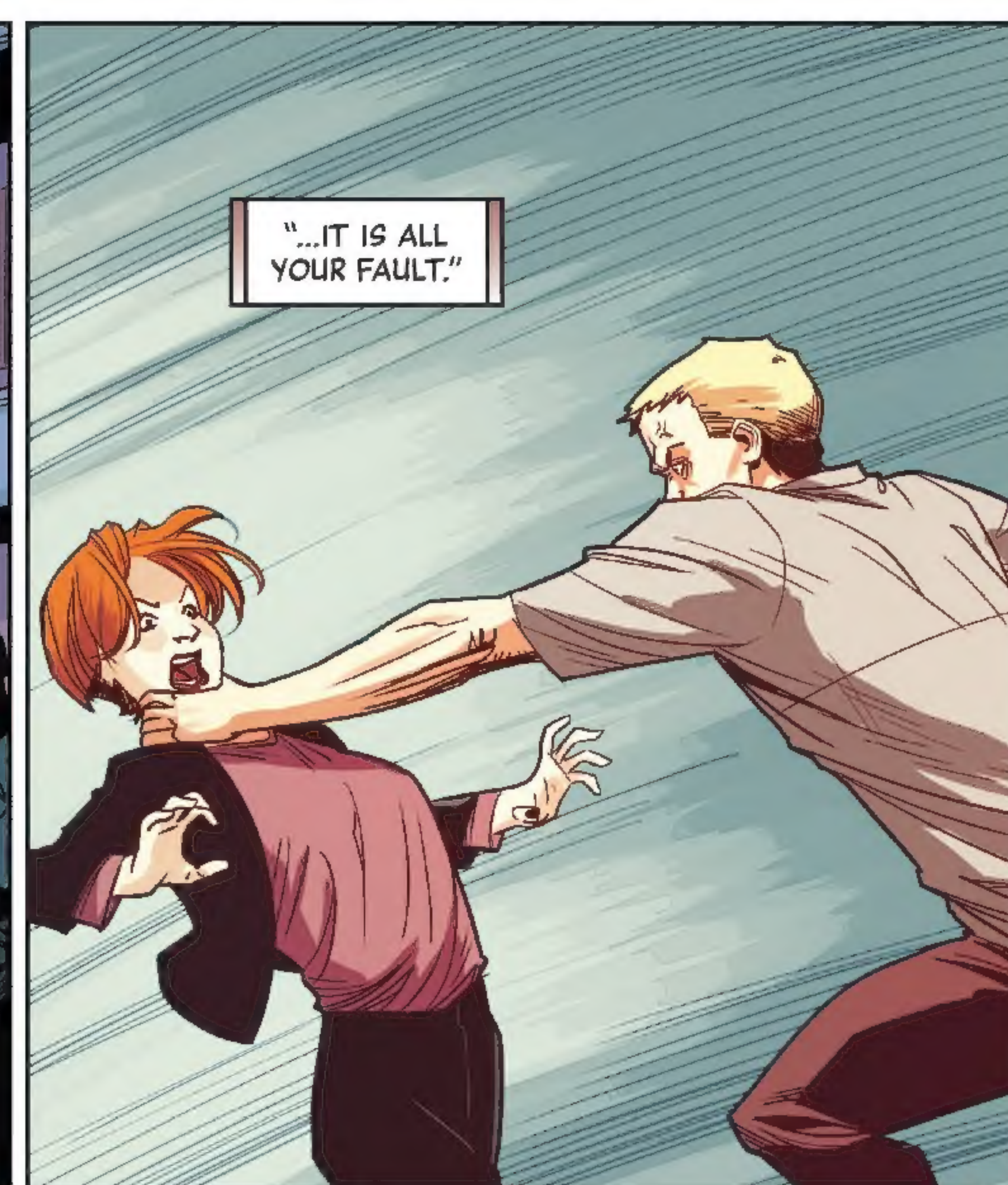
"...IS AS FAR FROM SAFE AS YOU CAN POSSIBLY IMAGINE."



NOAH, AFTER ALL THIS TIME, I STILL DON'T KNOW IF YOU'RE AN IDEALIST OR A LUNATIC...

...BUT I DO KNOW YOU'VE MADE A MESS OF EVERYTHING.

EVERYTHING THAT HAS GONE WRONG...



"...IT IS ALL YOUR FAULT."



STAY HERE, DOC. I'LL TAKE CARE OF THESE JOKERS.

MITCHELL, THEIR BLADES CAN CUT THROUGH YOUR SKIN.

OH, A LITTLE SCRATCH NEVER HURT ANYONE...



...BUT LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I RIP THE ARMS OFF THESE JACKASSES AND CARVE THEM UP LIKE HANUKKAH HAMS.



"IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE LIKE THIS. THERE'S BEEN ENOUGH KILLING..."



...WE'RE ALL ON THE SAME SIDE--WE ALL HAVE THE SAME GOALS.



"IS THAT WHAT YOU THINK, MORGAN..."



...THAT WE'RE ON THE SAME SIDE?

YOU DREAM ABOUT RIPPING OUT YOUR OWN GUTS AND DANCING AROUND NAKED, COVERED IN YOUR BLOOD WHILE WATCHING YOURSELF DIE?



'CAUSE THAT'S THE SIDE I'M ON!



WELL, LET'S MAKE THAT DREAM COME TRUE.



MITCHELL, STOP BEFORE YOU GET KILLED!



ARGH!

TIS...BUT...A... SCRATCH...



POOR MITCHELL. WE CAN'T LET HIM DIE--TOO MANY PEOPLE HAVE DIED BECAUSE OF ALL OF THIS.

IF BURSTEIN CAN KEEP THIS FREAK ALIVE, FINE. OTHERWISE, WE HARVEST WARHAWK'S ORGANS--THERE'S MONEY TO BE MADE FROM HIS DNA.



WHAT'RE WE DOIN', MAN? ALL THEM BODIES WE LEFT BACK THERE--WE GOTTA GET OUT OF TOWN.

NO. WE'VE GOTTA TAKE CARE OF BUSINESS-- PUT A STOP TO ALL THIS.

AND YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON, HUH? YOU GOT IT ALL FIGURED OUT?



GOT AN IDEA. HOW MUCH YOU KNOW ABOUT THE SUPER-SOLDIER SERUM?

READ ABOUT IT ON THE INTERNET-- IT'S HOW CAPTAIN AMERICA GOT HIS POWERS.

NOT JUST CAPTAIN AMERICA. ME, YOU...



"...AND A LOT OF OTHERS.

"DIFFERENT VARIATIONS ON THE SERUM AND THE EXPERIMENT. DIFFERENT RESULTS.

"SOME GOOD..."



...SOME NOT SO GOOD.

I'M THINKING THAT'S WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT.



YOU SEE WHAT I DID BACK THERE?!

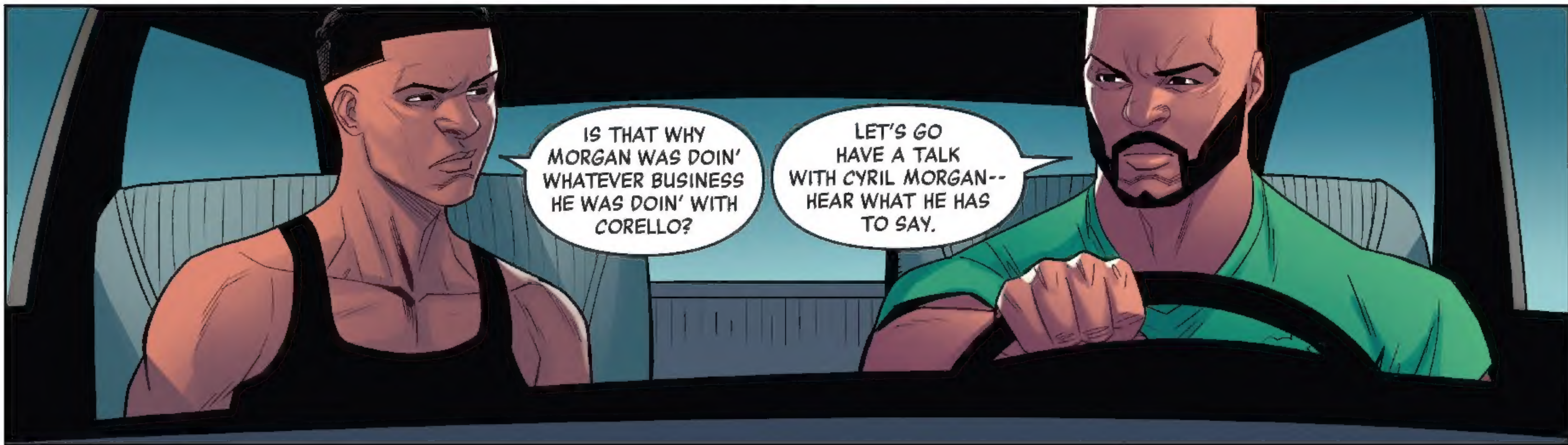
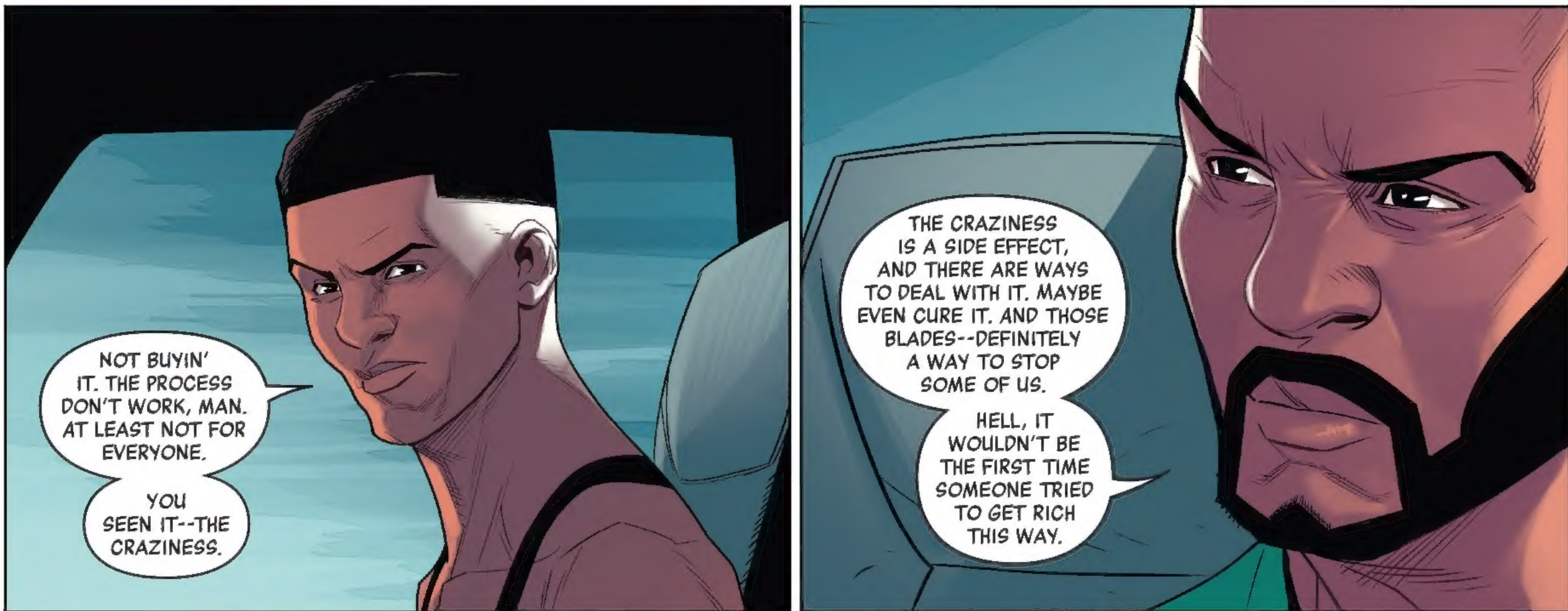
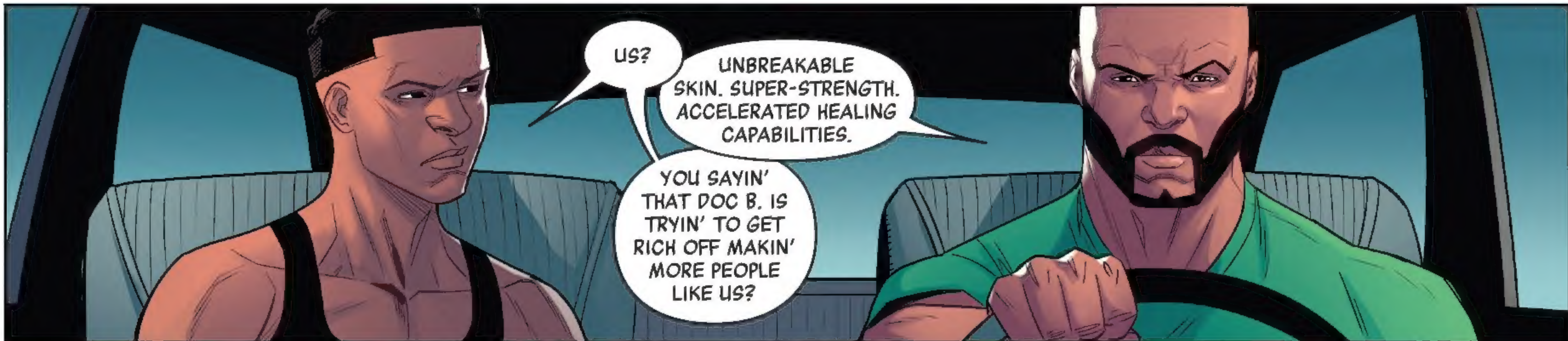
I WENT CRAZY! JUST LIKE ALL THE OTHERS!

I DON'T WANT TO BE LIKE THE REST OF THEM--A TICKING TIME BOMB.



ALL THE MORE REASON TO TAKE CARE OF ALL OF THIS.

SEE, IT'S LIKE THIS...





CYRIL, I KNOW YOU'RE UPSET WITH ME--I UNDERSTAND THAT. BUT LETTING THIS MAN DIE...

HE'S ONE OF THE KEYS TO EVERYTHING YOU WANT.

YOU SHOULD'VE THOUGHT ABOUT THAT BEFORE YOU PISSED ALL OVER EVERYTHING I'VE DONE FOR YOU--



--BEFORE YOU **BETRAYED** MY TRUST.

DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH MONEY I INVESTED IN YOUR EXPERIMENTS?



THE TWO OF YOU CAN ARGUE LATER-- WE HAVE WORK TO DO.

LENORE-- WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?

DO YOU MEAN TRYING TO SAVE WARHAWK'S LIFE, OR CHOOSING MORGAN OVER YOU?



I LOST SIGHT OF THINGS IN THE EXCITEMENT OF DISCOVERY, BUT NOAH...

...EVERYTHING GOT OUT OF CONTROL, AND IT'S ALL BECAUSE OF YOU.

ALL THESE DEATHS...SOMEONE HAS TO TRY TO UNDO ALL THE DAMAGE YOU'VE DONE.



SHE'S RIGHT, NOAH...

DAD? WHAT'S...



...WHAT'S GOING ON?

CALEB, THIS DOESN'T CONCERN YOU.

BUT... DR. BURSTEIN?



NOT THE TIME, SON.

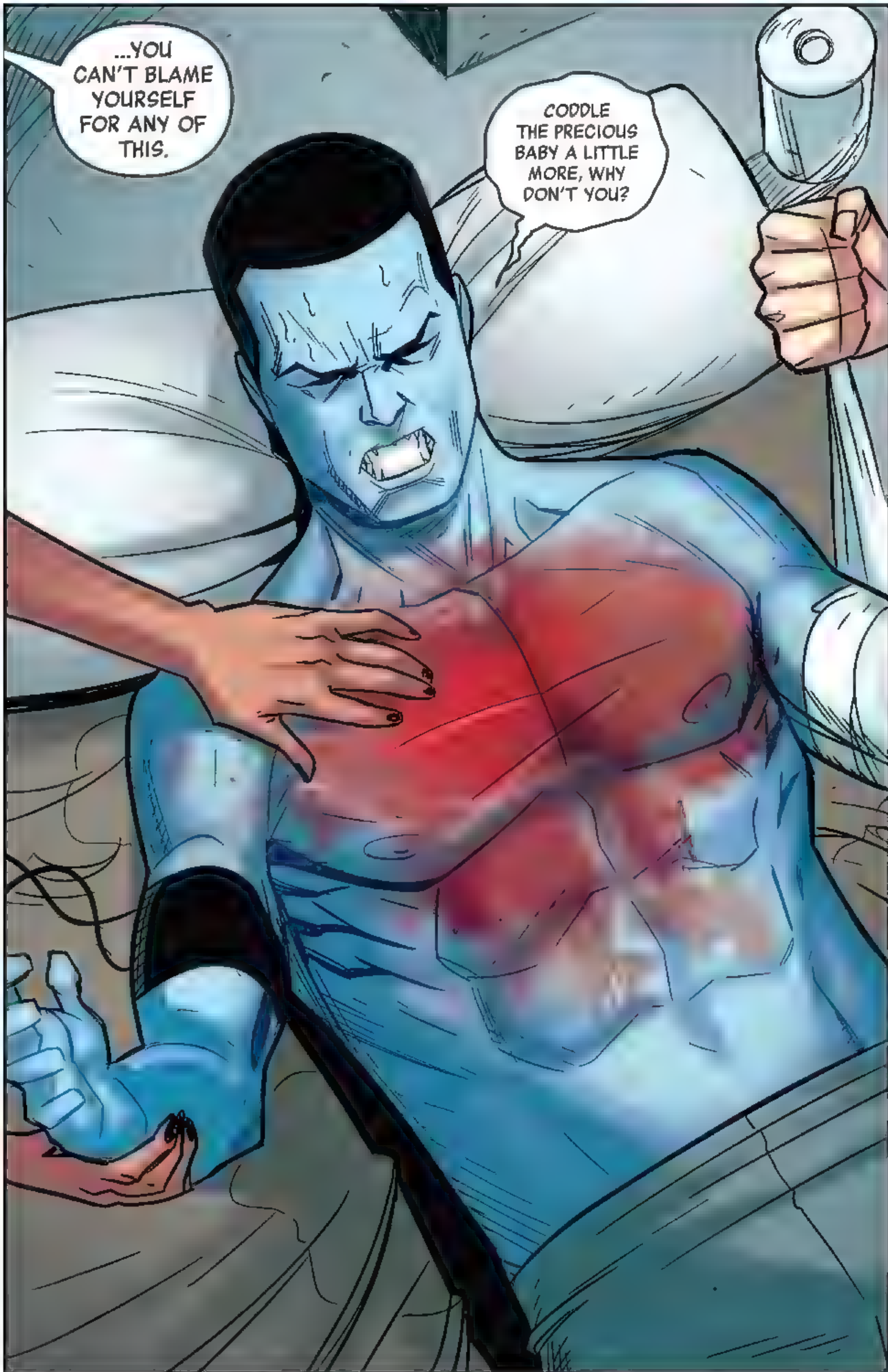
DAD, PLEASE...

...I DON'T WANT MORE PEOPLE TO DIE BECAUSE OF ME.



CALEB, NONE OF THIS IS YOUR FAULT-- NOT EVEN THE DEATH OF MY WIFE.

HE'S RIGHT, CALEB...



...YOU CAN'T BLAME YOURSELF FOR ANY OF THIS.

CODDLE THE PRECIOUS BABY A LITTLE MORE, WHY DON'T YOU?



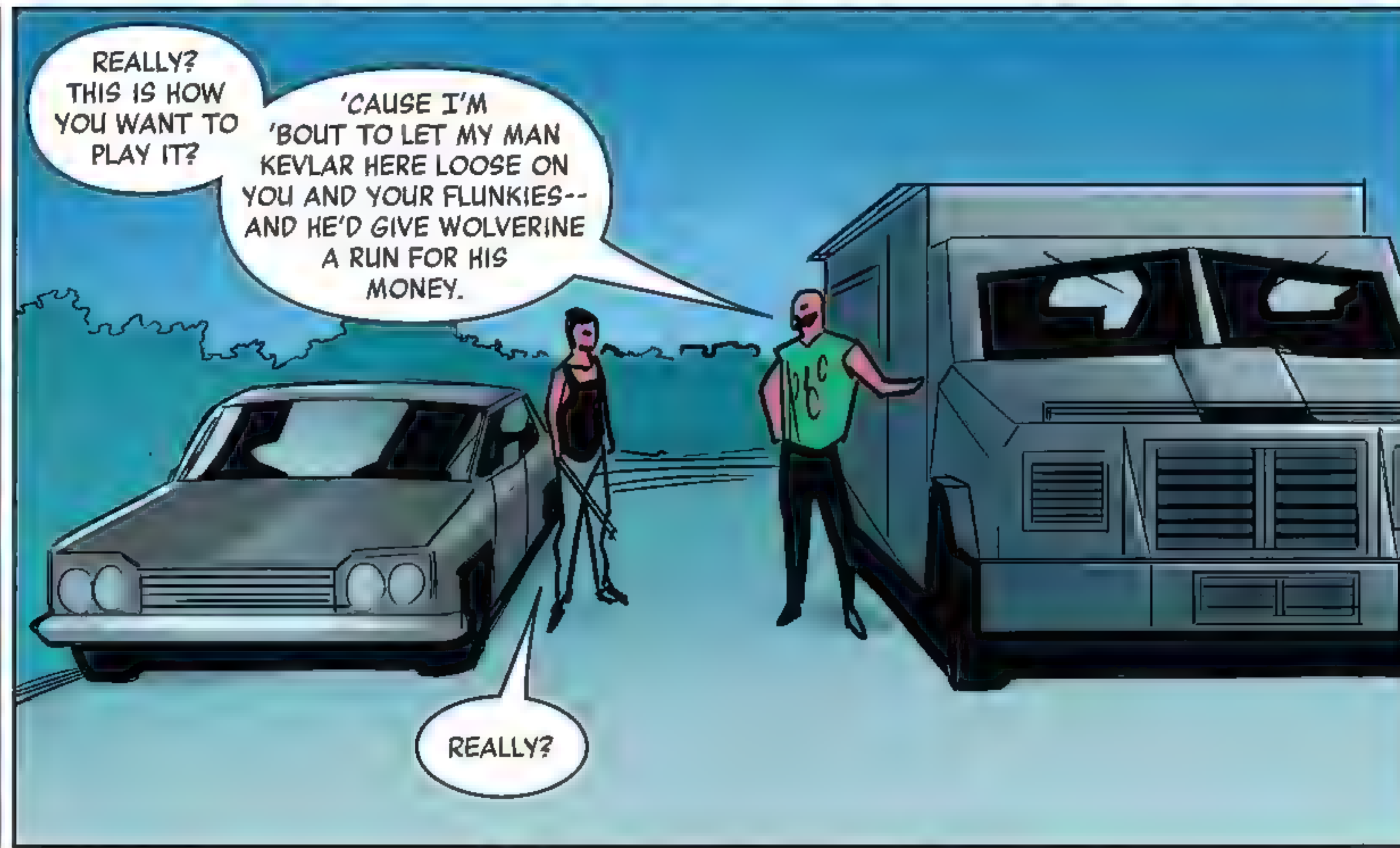
SOME DAY, YOU'LL UNDERSTAND ALL OF THIS.

BURSTEIN MAY HAVE SAVED YOUR LIFE WITH HIS EXPERIMENTS, BUT HE'S A MADMAN--HE'S CURSED US ALL WITH HIS SECRETS AND LIES.



WHAT IS IT?

WANTED YOU TO KNOW...









COME ON, SON--WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE!

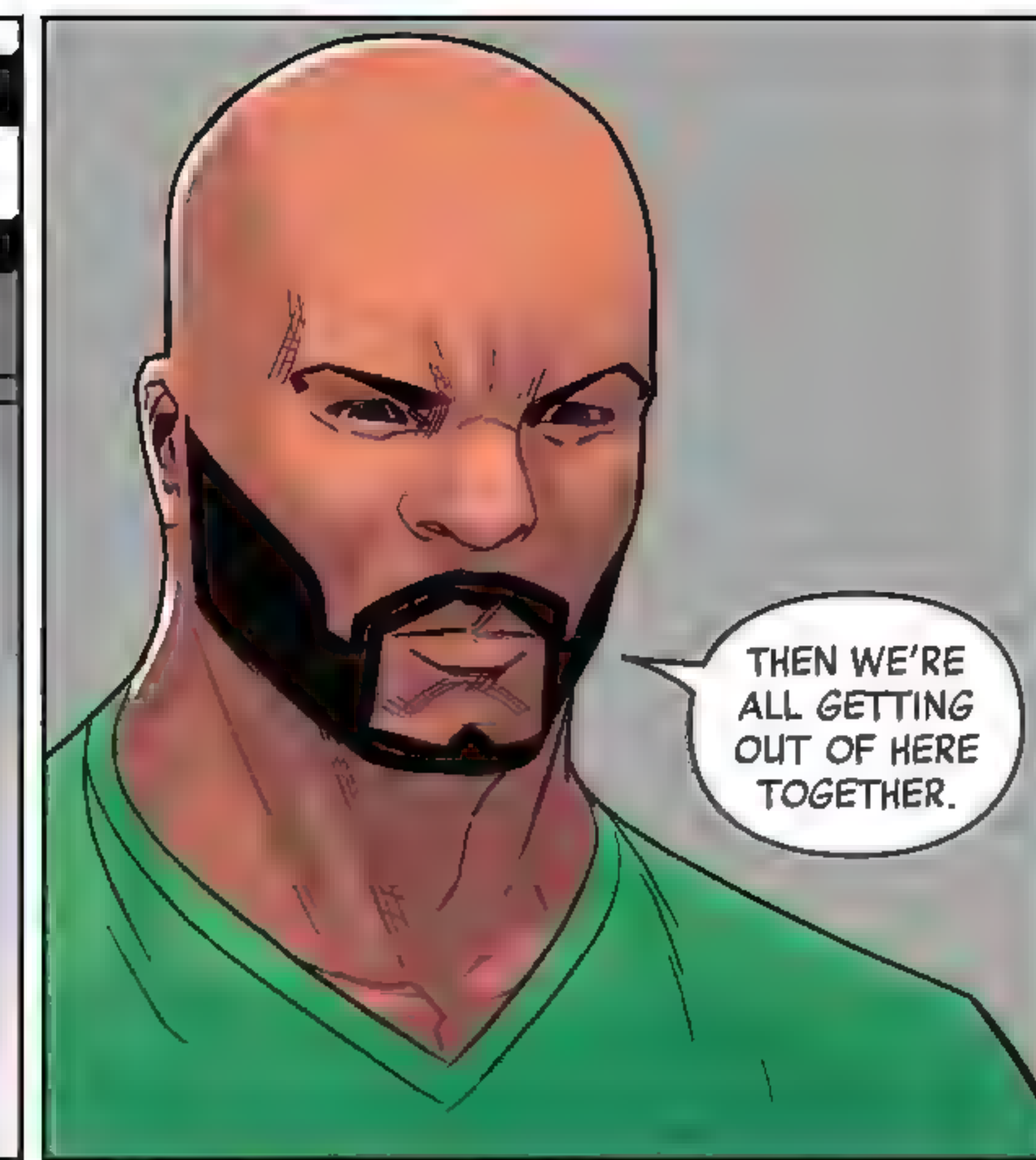


GOING SOMEWHERE?

GET OUT OF MY WAY...



...THOSE CHEMICALS COULD EXPLODE ANY MINUTE!

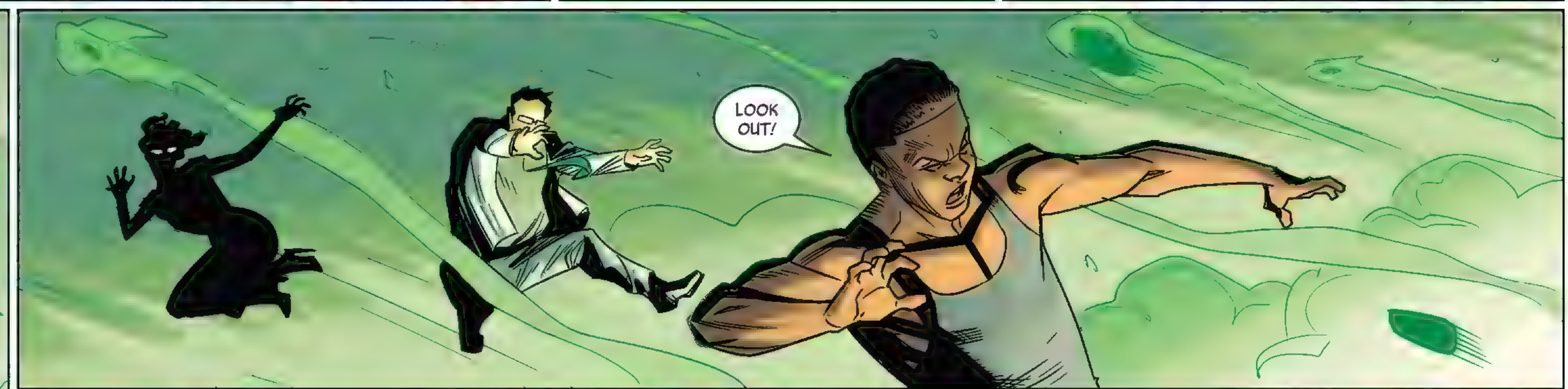


THEN WE'RE ALL GETTING OUT OF HERE TOGETHER.

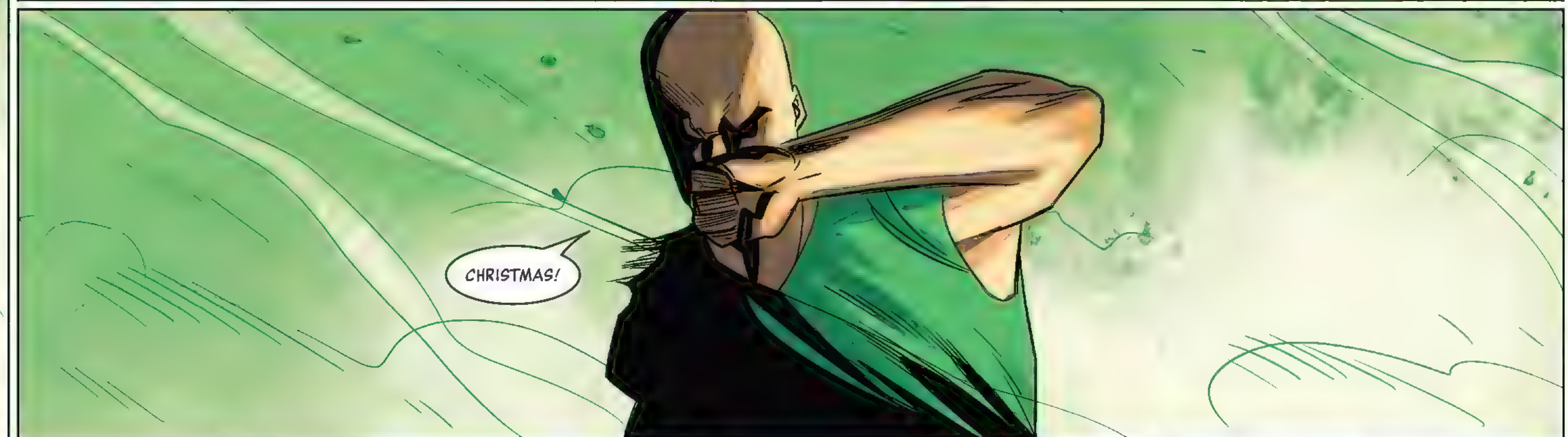


C'MON, OLD MAN, MOVE!

CAN'T LEAVE MITCHELL-- WE HAVE TO...



LOOK OUT!



CHRISTMAS!



HEAD... RINGING...



LENORE, KEVLAR... WAIT...



...WHERE'S MITCHELL?



CALEB... SAY SOMETHING, CALEB...



UNGH...

OH, MITCHELL... KEVIN, COULD YOU ASSIST ME?



WE HAVE TO GET HIM OUT OF HERE, GET HIM TO SOMEWHERE SAFE.

PLEASE, I NEED YOUR HELP, SON.

HE WEIGHS A TON.



NOAH...
WHAT'VE YOU
DONE?

I HAVEN'T
DONE ANYTHING.

LOOK AROUND
YOU--**SOMEONE** IS
RESPONSIBLE.



I DON'T HAVE TIME
FOR THIS--**WE** DON'T HAVE
TIME FOR THIS. MITCHELL'S
INJURIES REQUIRE IMMEDIATE
ATTENTION.

WHAT
ABOUT THE
OTHERS? THERE'S
A PILE OF
BODIES.



I CAN'T DO
ANYTHING FOR THE
DEAD. I HELP THE **LIVING**.
I HELPED YOU--MADE
YOU THE MAN YOU
ARE TODAY.



THERE'S NO
WALKING AWAY
FROM THIS,
BURSTEIN.

WATCH ME.
I HAVE WORK
TO DO.



OWN THIS,
BURSTEIN. OWN
EVERYTHING YOU'VE
DONE HERE AND
STOP WITH THE
EXPERIMENTS...

...OR I WILL
TRACK YOU DOWN,
AND STOP YOU
MYSELF.

STOP ME
AND WARHAWK
DIES NOW. OTHERS
LATER.



MY WORK
SAVES LIVES. I'D
HOPED YOU COULD
UNDERSTAND
THAT.

YOU WERE LIKE A
SON TO ME, LUKE.
NOW...YOU'RE JUST A
DISAPPOINTMENT.

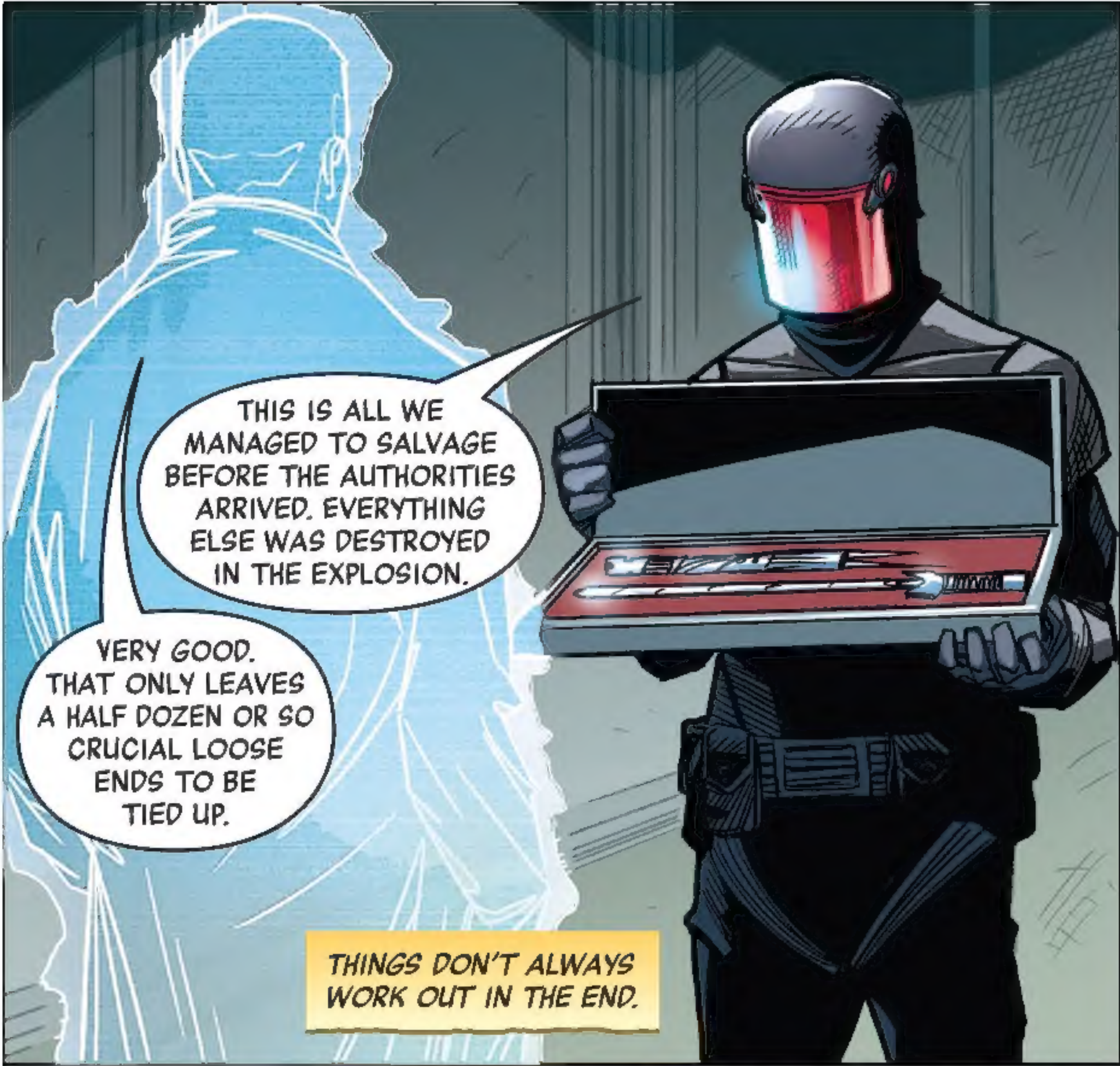


DAMN.



NOT LIKE
THIS...





THIS IS ALL WE MANAGED TO SALVAGE BEFORE THE AUTHORITIES ARRIVED. EVERYTHING ELSE WAS DESTROYED IN THE EXPLOSION.

VERY GOOD. THAT ONLY LEAVES A HALF DOZEN OR SO CRUCIAL LOOSE ENDS TO BE TIED UP.

THINGS DON'T ALWAYS WORK OUT IN THE END.



AND THE END ISN'T ALWAYS THE END, ANYWAY...

THIS IS IT? US ON THE RUN FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES?

FOR NOW.

I'M HUNGRY. ANY RAVIOLI LEFT?



...SOMETIMES THE END IS JUST THE BEGINNING OF SOMETHING MUCH WORSE.

IT'S THE MOMENT WHEN YOU REALIZE THAT ALL YOUR HOPES AND DREAMS ARE OVER...



...AND ALL THAT IS LEFT IS THE HARSH REALITY OF WHAT CAN'T BE UNDONE, AND A DOWNWARD SPIRAL OF REGRET.



I'M SORRY, CALEB. I REALLY AM.

I WAS ABLE TO TURN CARL LUCAS INTO LUKE CAGE. STEP OUT OF MY FATHERS' SHADOWS AND DECIDE WHO I AM.



YOU DESERVED BETTER. YOU NEVER GOT THAT CHANCE.

I WON'T FORGET THAT.

TO BE CONTINUED!

POWER MAIL

Send us your letters at mheroes@marvel.com and mark them "okay to print"!

Hello, folks,

Like many people (well, I hope it was many), I was very upset at the demise of the wonderful PM&IF series. Few Marvel comics made me literally laugh out loud like that one did. Thankfully, from the ashes of that book we have solo series for our beloved Heroes for Hire, as well as the brilliant DEFENDERS. But my reason for writing is Luke's latest book, and what a pleasant read it is. Warhawk??? Now THAT I did not see coming. I honestly thought the guy was dead. But seeing Mitchell Tanner again was a nice blast from the past. And once again, the writing is fantastic. Luke manages to walk a thin line between being a total badass to laugh-out-loud funny (although I still miss his and Danny's banter). Even Warhawk had some hilarious dialogue. To me, that is a definite selling point in any comic and will keep me coming back for more. I also love dialogue-heavy books—if it only takes me two minutes to finish an issue I feel ripped off. LUKE CAGE really gives me a lot to sink my teeth into and I appreciate that.

So, not much else to say as this series is just getting started, but so far it's been a home run—great dialogue, superb art and a compelling storyline. Thanks for all of that. :)

Dan

On behalf of all writers (or at least some writers), let me say, "THANK YOU!" I can't tell you how many times people complain about comics having too much dialogue. It's one thing to be too lazy to read, but it is another thing to admit that you're too lazy to read.

I was very glad to see my cousin Noah Burstein wasn't actually dead. Thanks to David F. Walker and the whole team for keeping him alive. I'm hoping now that Luke isn't going to be too mad at him...

Best,
Michael A. Burstein

I feel you. I hate it when family members fake their deaths and put me through unwarranted grieving.

I just finished reading all of the LUKE CAGE series so far and I love it. I have just lately been getting into comics and I know I will be buying every new issue. The series has great storylines and stuff to make you think about what is happening. I am a new fan, and I think that it helps me zone out and get into a different place and helps me be calm and happy. I love Marvel and LUKE CAGE and I hope you keep up the good work and make me happy with every read. The next issue will be bought straightaway on the day it comes out.

P.S. Could you maybe make a character called Hurley, please? That would make my day.

Thanks to everyone involved with this comic!

Connor Hurley
England

Calm and happy are good places to be.

Sweet Christmas, this series is good! First off, every cover so far has been beautiful. I love the photo-realism of the covers. Rahzzah does an awesome job and appears to be shaping up to be the next Alex Ross if he keeps it up. Not only is the cover art amazing, but the actual comic art itself is top-notch. The combined efforts of Blake, Menyz and Rahzzah alone are enough to buy this book, but David F. Walker puts it over the top with an awesome story, and I can't wait to see where it goes. It really hones in on the core aspects of the character, which is great for newcomers like me, whose only exposure to the character has been through the awesome Netflix series. Keep up the great work.

Brian Purcell
Saratoga Springs, NY

Thank you. I'm fortunate to be working with a great team of artists.

Burstein is a real cold son of a bitch. David handled Luke's realization that Burstein's "You're like a son to me" is an insincere declaration that he makes to all his experiments. I'm enjoying the exploration of the gray areas of science.

I've got a music recommendation for David: Michael Kiwanuka, a young black singer-songwriter with a smooth, soulful Marvin Gaye voice and Hendrix guitar chops. Check out his last album *Love & Hate*.

Be seeing you,
Bruce Marsh
Newbury Park, England

Listening to Michael Kiwanuka right now. Thanks for the recommendation. And yeah, I really wanted to play with how Burstein keeps saying, "You're like a son to me." It's like people who say "I love you" without really understanding what love is.

I'm really loving the LUKE CAGE series. Even more so because it's taking place in New Orleans. As an African American from Louisiana, it's inspiring to see a hero who reflects me in a story that takes place so close to home.

Martin Arvie
Ville Platte, LA

There are a lot of us looking for heroes close to home that reflect us and give us a sense of belonging in a world that often forgets we exist. That's part of why I do what I do. I'm glad it is resonating with you.

-David F. Walker



